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ABSTRACT

In 1997, Governor Terry Branstad appointed 14 Iowa citizens, educators, and leaders to a special commission to create a vision and roadmap for the state's prekindergarten through 12th grade educational system. Working groups assisted the commission by addressing issues and drafting recommendations in four key areas: high expectations for students, instructional program quality, student achievement, and parent and community involvement. The commission envisioned opportunities for students to develop needed skills, development of community-generated performance indicators, a lifelong continuum of educational services, and schools' transformation into active, community-oriented learning centers. The commission believes that Iowa schools will have more flexible schedules; challenging curricula; updated technologies; well-prepared, professionalized teachers; collaborative, visionary administrators; and parents as full decision-making partners. The commission's recommendations for excellence are based on three principles: strengthening the local autonomy of Iowa's schools and districts; establishing a commitment to continuous improvement; and aligning the state's leadership, oversight, and funding role with these goals at the school level. Recommendations are organized around six major themes: accountability for student achievement; strategies to improve achievement for all students; school readiness; a transformed education profession; strong family, community, and school relationships; and financial support. (MLH)

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THE GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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September 12, 1997

The Honorable Terry E. Branstad
Governor of Iowa
State Capitol Building
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Governor Branstad:

The Commission on Educational Excellence for the 21st Century is proud to present its final report to you.

Throughout our deliberations the input of Iowa's many constituencies was sought and the Commission was constantly touched with the sincerity and commitment of our fellow Iowans to provide the best quality education in the world for our children.

The passion which our fellow citizens have for our children is shared deeply and the Commission feels this has been among the most important civic commitments we have individually or collectively made. It is our strong belief that the recommendations contained in our report outline a vision and roadmap for pre-kindergarten through grade 12 education that will ensure Iowa's educational system continues its tradition of providing the best education to its young people.

It is our hope that in some small measure this study will have made a difference to our children and to our state. Thank you for entrusting us with this extraordinary assignment.

It will be our pleasure to review the contents of this report with you.

Cordially,

Marvin A. Pomerantz
Chairman
Commission on Educational Excellence
for the 21st Century

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STATE OF IOWA
COMMISSION ON EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

FINAL REPORT

An Overview

Iowa's future is in its school classrooms today—students will become the parents, citizens, business people, teachers, community leaders, workers, and policy makers of the next century. The education that they receive today will largely determine the quality of life that they will be able to forge for themselves and their families in the future.

Iowa is fortunate to have one of the best K-12 educational systems in the nation, from its K-12 schools through its postsecondary institutions. Several factors have contributed to this excellence, including: a literate population, a strong tradition of community and political support based on the belief that the school was the center of the community, an effective system of service agencies that support the schools, and a dedicated and talented group of educators. These things form a strong foundation that will enable Iowans to continue to build educational excellence for the future.

And build we must, to keep pace with the rapidly changing world and the even more rapidly changing demands that are being placed on our schools. Economic, demographic and social changes during the past two decades have had a profound impact on Iowa's communities and families, and have dramatically affected the learning needs of this generation of young people. A growing number of children are at risk as a result of social, economic and environmental conditions; the number of single parent households is increasing at a rapid rate; more families have two parents working outside the home; and there is a growing number of students with limited English language proficiency.

Another change that is affecting our educational system is the increasing connection between education and employment. Today, nearly all persons need some postsecondary education to be competitive for a good-paying job. That will only increase. In addition, today's students will be the first generation for whom life-long learning will be essential to retaining their jobs or maintaining their professional license or standing. Thus, all Iowa's students need an excellent education: those who are gifted and talented, those with special needs, and the large number students in the middle who are all too often overlooked.

Knowledge is rapidly becoming the most important resource in our world. It's limitless and it's renewable. In order for today's students to be successful in the world of the 21st century, they must be proficient in obtaining knowledge and in putting knowledge to use—throughout their lifetimes. This will require fundamental change in the way we approach education for our children.

The Commission on Educational Excellence for the 21st Century: Its Charge

In February 1997, Governor Terry Branstad appointed 14 Iowa citizens, educators and leaders to a special Commission on Educational Excellence for the 21st Century. Its charge: to create a vision and a roadmap for pre-kindergarten through 12th grade education in Iowa to ensure that Iowa's educational system continues its tradition of providing the best education to its young people.

Through monthly meetings held throughout Iowa, focus sessions and town meetings, including one statewide meeting over the Iowa Communications Network, the commission has obtained widespread input from the people of Iowa to help formulate this vision and this roadmap.

In addition, working groups consisting of more than 40 Iowans—parents, business people, educators and representatives of several organizations from across the state—assisted the Commission by addressing issues in four key areas and preparing draft recommendations for the Commission. These areas are:

1) high expectations for students;
2) quality of the instructional program;
3) student achievement; and
4) parent and community involvement.

Using all of the information obtained through these public meetings and working group sessions, the Commission developed an overall mission statement, a vision statement, a set of principles, and specific recommendations that, if adopted, will ensure Iowa's tradition of educational excellence and leadership into the 21st century.

The Commission's Mission Statement

The mission of Iowa's educational system is to provide the best quality education in the world, so that every child has the opportunity to grow up to be a productive, self-reliant and fulfilled citizen.

The Commission's Vision

The Commission envisions:

- That every student in Iowa has the opportunity to acquire the skills they will need to meet the challenges of the future. In addition to basic skills of reading, writing and

arithmetic (the three R's), these include: 1) the ability to collect, analyze, organize, and communicate ideas and information; 2) the ability to identify and solve problems; 3) the ability to apply mathematical reasoning and computational skills to real-world problems; 4) the ability to read and understand work-related materials; 5) the ability to use technology; 6) the ability to interact with others; 7) the ability to function effectively as a member of a team; 8) the ability to take responsibility for career and life choices; and 9) the ability and desire to demonstrate respect for others.

- That in each community, parents, business people and community members work closely with educators to develop a set of local performance indicators that outline the community's expectations for what students should know and be able to do, and that each school and school district develop a school improvement plan designed to ensure that its students meet these expectations. Such a plan should include a set of goals and benchmarks to measure progress. Curriculum, instruction, resource allocation, reporting and other essential functions are aligned with this plan, and the entire school community holds itself accountable for meeting goals and is committed to continuous quality improvement.

- That education consists of a continuum of services from early care and preschool education to lifelong learning and adult education. Iowans in the 21st century will no longer think in terms of elementary/secondary and postsecondary education, but rather in terms of a continuum of services for lifelong learning. Along this continuum:

  - Schools work closely with child, family and community agencies to ensure that every child comes to school ready to learn. Parent support and education programs are widely available for children and their families from birth to age 3; at-risk four-year-olds have the opportunity to attend preschool; and full-day, five-day-a-week kindergarten is required.

  - Schools develop partnerships with nearby colleges and universities so that secondary and postsecondary educational opportunities are continuous, and age and access barriers disappear. Postsecondary institutions provide advanced placement courses, vocational education experiences, intensive professional development experiences, technology resources and other services, while K-12 schools host professional development schools that help prepare teachers for future challenges.

  - Schools and school districts strengthen and expand upon partnerships with area education agencies, community colleges, workforce development boards and local business and industry to provide students with career awareness and exploration opportunities, work-based learning experiences, and a system of career options to help ease the transition from school to work or career.

- That Iowa's schools become visible and active learning centers that offer an array of stimulating learning opportunities for the entire community, such as family resource centers, centers for older citizens, and centers for lifelong learning. School buildings should not be limited by today's definition of "school"; they should be hubs of the community. These buildings should be open year-round and from early morning to late in the evening to accommodate adult and community education programs, child care programs, and community recreation activities. They should house health and social service agencies; serve as the community's volunteer center; and provide a wide range of education classes, from parenting and childbirth to pre-retirement planning.

What is the school of the future like for students?

Schools are no longer bound by school walls or too-tight schedules, including the six or seven 40- to 45-minute periods per day, 180 days per year. Schools use existing time more efficiently and effectively, creating more flexible schedules, exploring multi-age grouping, and making other adjustments to support students' learning and teachers' professional development. And since the school is open year-round to the community, many schools choose to modify their calendars. By dispersing vacation time throughout the year, some of the learning loss that typically follows the three-month summer vacation can be prevented. And by extending the school year for students and teachers, more time can be devoted to student learning, and teacher planning and professional development.

The division between school and community is increasingly blurred, as students engage in long-term projects and real-world learning experiences that reinforce and extend classroom-based learning. Students engage in service learning projects, such as tutoring younger students, reading to older citizens, or cleaning up a local neighborhood. Depending on their interests, talents and career goals, they have the opportunity to learn about the latest advances in medical science or agriculture from local experts, to apprentice with artists and musicians in the community, or to take on internships in state and local business and industry.

What is the curriculum of the future like for students?

The curriculum is designed to prepare students for the 21st century. It engages and challenges all students. It focuses on depth over breadth, and encourages students to develop deep understandings of key concepts. The curriculum provides opportunities for students to gather and analyze information, solve problems, reason, communicate and develop their creative and teamwork abilities. It also ensures that students have opportunities to build on their interests and engage in real-world problem solving. For example, middle school students studying geometry

and physics will design living spaces that meet certain design requirements and physical science principles. And they will do the work in teams, to strengthen the cooperative learning aspect of the curriculum and prepare them for how they will need to address problems as employees and citizens. Students are assessed on the quality of their work, their progress over time, their ability to demonstrate their understanding using a variety of methods, and their ability to apply what they have learned to real-world situations, not simply on the basis of scores on multiple-choice tests.

How will technology be used in the schools of the future?

Teachers take maximum advantage of new developments in technology--computers in the classroom, educational software, access to the Internet, and the availability of laptop computers--to provide expanded and personalized learning. Technology is used to move beyond the traditional boundaries of school time and space, to accommodate different rates and styles of learning, and to engage students in real-world, real-time activities. Technology is also used to ensure that students in small rural communities have ready access to specialized course offerings and to serve students with special needs more effectively. By using advanced communications technology, students in Sioux City can share in an excellent unit on soil conservation with students in Bridgewater-Fontanelle. Moreover, both groups can communicate with leading experts in the field not only in Iowa but around the world.

What is the school of the future like for teachers?

As we enter the 21st century, the changing needs of students require teachers who are themselves changing, growing and taking on new professional roles. Teachers must use new methods that encourage students to think critically and creatively, and to work collaboratively to solve problems. Such learning experiences are challenging to organize, manage, and assess. They require the teacher to go beyond textbooks and integrate a variety of materials in order to appropriately challenge and support their particular students. Teachers need to become adept at learning what their students know and provide them with personalized strategies and problem-solving opportunities to extend their thinking. Teachers themselves must be rigorous learners. They must continue to know their students well, have a firm and deep grasp of their content area, be well prepared and practiced in implementing instructional strategies, and in addition to this, have an understanding of the interrelationship among these three facets of effective teaching.

As a professional leader, the teacher's role extends beyond intellectual leadership in the classroom (Shlectly 1987). Teachers in the 21st century participate in key decisions at the school and district level. They help shape policy in a variety of areas, including standards of performance for students, curriculum, health and safety, transportation, community service, and parent involvement. While they each have a specialized expertise, as members of a team they also learn from and support their peers. Furthermore, on any given day, they may coordinate the

work of a parent volunteer, mentor a beginning teacher, collaborate with a technology specialist, design an interdisciplinary unit, or work closely with licensed support staff. Their new responsibilities require administrative, organizational, and interpersonal skills, and the ability to couple strong ideas with care and compassion (Lieberman, Saxl, and Miles; 1988).

This new vision of teaching attracts the best students to the profession. They are well prepared and they are rewarded for their high degree of professionalism. They are key parts of a learning environment that supports and demands continuous learning and improvement. Teachers undergo an intensive preparation program that includes college coursework, experience in the classroom, and a one-year internship. In order to receive a teaching license, teachers meet stringent performance criteria. Their learning, however, does not end with licensure. Flexible schedules allow teachers ample time to prepare for classes, to discuss teaching techniques with colleagues and with teacher education professionals, and to enhance their own abilities through ongoing professional development.

The professional isolation that once plagued many teachers is gone. Teachers are a part of a larger learning community, learning alongside their colleagues and taking full advantage of the Iowa Communications Network and other advancements in technology to create professional networks that foster on-line sharing, team problem solving and peer coaching. Teachers are well paid, and those who demonstrate innovation, creativity and responsibility merit special rewards.

What is the school of the future like for administrators?

Administrators in the 21st century recognize the importance of collaborative leadership. They work closely with teachers, parents and community members, making shared decisions on the basis of hard data and the desire for continuous quality improvement.

In addition to having a solid educational background and knowledge of best educational practices, administrators have a strong vision and high expectations for students and staff alike. They recognize that for teachers to grow as intellectuals and professional leaders, they must help create a school culture that fosters risk-taking and reflection, provides adequate time and resources for ongoing professional development, and fosters collegiality and joint problem solving. Moreover, administrators of tomorrow provide teachers and other staff with varied, individualized incentives that encourage and reward lifelong learning.

Administrators in the next millennium make efficient use of resources by pooling various funds where appropriate, consolidating services across schools and school districts, collaborating with other community service agencies, taking advantage of the ICN to offer specialized courses, and using business/industry settings and community colleges to offer school-to-career programs. Like teachers, they are expected to engage in lifelong learning, and they are rewarded for meritorious performance.

What is the school of the future like for parents?

The schools view parents as full partners in decision making. They keep all lines of communication open—personal contacts, written correspondence, e-mail, voice mail, telephone, family meetings, workshops—and all inquiries and concerns are responded to immediately. Schools capitalize on family strengths and provide a variety of different opportunities for parents to support their children at home and at school. To ensure that parent involvement is a core function, school districts assign leadership and coordination functions to appropriate personnel who are responsible not only for encouraging parent involvement, but also for documenting progress in this area.

These are not new concepts. The heritage of Iowa's educational strength was built on these very principles. We must rediscover these principles and apply them today with all the commitment possible. We expect all of Iowa's executive branch agencies, schools, school districts and boards, teacher education institutions, business and industry, parents and others concerned with the education of our children to make this commitment. Our children's future and the future of this state deserve nothing less.

The Commission's Recommendations

The Commission's recommendations for continued excellence in Iowa's education system reflect its vision. They are based upon three principles:

1) Maintaining and building upon the strength of local autonomy of Iowa's schools and school districts;

2) Establishing a commitment to continuous improvement, including the implementation of best practices and the use of benchmarks to monitor progress at the local school level; and

3) Aligning the state's role of leadership, oversight and funding of the educational system as a whole with the continuous improvement model at the local school level.

The recommendations are organized around six major themes:

I. Accountability for Student Achievement
II Strategies to Improve Achievement for all Students
III. School Readiness for Every Child
IV. Transformation of the Education Profession for the 21st Century
V. Strong Family, Community and School Relationships
VI. Financial Support for Education

I. Accountability for Student Achievement

Iowa has a strong tradition of local control which has served it well over the years. We want local school districts to remain accountable for setting their own standards for what students should know and be able to do. At the same time, we believe that all of Iowa's students should have the opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills they need to participate in a democracy, to engage in challenging and rewarding work, to pursue education of choice, and to enjoy quality of life. Therefore, it is time to insist on greater accountability for student learning and achievement. Accountability must be shared by students, parents, teachers, school and district administrators, school boards, area education agencies, community members, and the leaders and agencies in the state. The accountability system must focus on enhancing student achievement and ensure that all school improvement efforts are aligned with that goal.

A. **In cooperation with its community each school or district must determine clear standards of what students should know and be able to do for all major content areas and life-long learning skills**. These standards should clearly prepare Iowa students for the 21st century. These standards should be benchmarked at specific grade levels so all students, teachers, and parents know the expectations for learning. It is crucial that parents not only know what is to be learned but how well their student is learning; therefore, expected performance levels must be established by the school or district. Through the accreditation process, school districts will be held accountable for setting rigorous standards.

B. **Schools and school districts must use multiple assessment measures to determine whether students are learning and performing at the expected levels**. These may include student writing samples, portfolios of student work, exhibitions of student performance, as well as scores on standardized achievement tests. Progress toward achieving locally established goals must be reported back to the community. Information obtained from the assessment results should be used in a continuous improvement process to revise curriculum and instructional practices in the district, school and classroom.

C. **The Department of Education shall develop a common set of core indicators that measure success of Iowa students and schools**. Local districts shall report to their community and to the state the progress made by students on these indicators. The Department will report statewide progress made on these indicators. Academic core indicators shall include reading, writing, science and math. Other measures such as student success after graduation and parent/community involvement should be included in the common set of indicators.

D. **The State Board and Department of Education shall redesign school accreditation to focus on continuous improvement**. This process should include the following components: needs assessment, high standards, use of data, and public reporting of student achievement. It is essential that local districts are directly accountable to their communities for student learning. In order to eliminate duplication in federal and state reporting, the Department shall align components of school accreditation, 280.12/280.18, Phase III, and appropriate federal programs and consolidate reporting requirements into a comprehensive school improvement plan submitted for accreditation purposes.

II. Strategies to Improve Achievement for All Students

For years, we have been bound by school walls and schedules, with students proceeding in lockstep regardless of their ability to learn. Moreover, our curriculum has been altered and "added to" without looking at it for coherence or focus, and without regard to the knowledge and skills students will need for the 21st century. In order to improve achievement for all students—those who are gifted and talented, those with special learning needs, and those "in the middle"--schools and school districts must ensure that students have adequate time for learning, beginning with full-day kindergarten; a powerful and focused curriculum; and access to technology to support learning any time, any place. In addition, recognizing the critically important role that parents play in their children's learning and development, parents must be actively involved in their children's instructional program. Finally, those students who are at risk of academic failure or dropping out of school should have the extra support they need to help them achieve at high levels and graduate from high school.

A. **As a condition of accreditation, all school districts shall be required to offer all day, every day kindergarten**. Currently 20,000 students in Iowa receive this type of program. Implementing this recommendation would provide access to all-day, every day kindergarten to an additional 17,000 students.

B. **Local schools and school districts shall develop powerful core curriculum and assessment measures that encompass high expectations and engage and challenge all students**. The curriculum should encourage schools and teachers to focus on depth over breadth and to develop deep understanding of key concepts. Core curriculum in reading, writing, science and math should include opportunities for students to analyze information and solve problems. The curriculum should also provide for career exploration and planning, workplace readiness, applied learning and career transition activities.

C. **The comprehensive school improvement plan shall include a component designed to involve parents in the instructional program of their children**. Administrators and teachers must be prepared to recognize and build on family strengths and to foster school environments that are respectful and welcoming to all families. Every school and school district shall ensure that their personnel receive regular training, guidance, feedback and recognition on developing and sustaining partnerships with families. All school districts shall regularly seek "customer satisfaction" information from students, parents and community members and use that feedback to improve their programs.

D. **Schools and school districts shall provide support for at-risk students and for students who are not succeeding in the regular school environment**. Examples include programs cooperatively administered by school and juvenile justice authorities, assistance for students with limited English proficiency, and alternative programs for students who are at risk of dropping out of school before graduation.

E. **A Center for Continuous Quality Improvement shall be established to support schools and districts**. This center, housed within the Department of Education, should coordinate training and support, provide models of best practice in curriculum and assessment, and promote efficiency of resources. Partners in this center should include the Department, postsecondary institutions, local education agencies, area education agencies, the First In the Nation in Education Foundation and business. Department and FINE resources must be realigned to provide this support. The legislature should redirect the FINE Foundation resources to this Center.

In order to develop better communication among the various partners in teacher and administrator training and continuing education, the Center shall sponsor a facilitating council: The Iowa Partnership for Excellence in Education. The Governor will appoint representatives of teacher education programs, school districts, area education agencies, community colleges, associations, and the business community to the council. The council shall discuss mechanisms for ensuring continuous quality improvement of Iowa's educator preparation programs and make recommendations to the Iowa State Board of Education.

F. **The state should continue to provide some measure of instructional technology funding beyond the current five-year commitment**. Teachers and other educators should take maximum advantage of new developments in technology to provide expanded and individualized opportunities for learning; to move beyond the traditional boundaries of school time and space; to foster connections among various learning institutions; and to enhance links among family, school, and the larger community. Teacher education institutions, schools, and school districts should ensure that teachers have the training and ongoing support they need to use technology effectively. A plan to utilize technology to improve teaching and learning shall be incorporated into the comprehensive school improvement plan.

G. **Given the potential of technology to improve instruction, all students grade 4 and above should have access to a laptop computer to enhance opportunities for learning**. The private sector should have primary responsibility for providing the resources to support this goal. A plan to utilize technology to improve teaching and learning shall be incorporated into the comprehensive school improvement plan.

H. **The state must maintain its commitment to the ICN for educational purposes**. The state should encourage local districts and schools to take maximum advantage of the opportunities for telecommunications provided by the ICN to enhance student learning, professional development, and parent/community involvement. The state should move forward to increase utilization of the ICN in areas such as allowing high school students to take transferable college courses in core content areas over the ICN during the summer months.

III. School Readiness for Every Child

Mounting research attests to the importance of the first years of life. Social and environmental factors in the young child's life are strongly linked to the child's ability to succeed in school and life. Recent research on brain development underscores the importance of early prevention and intervention and in working with the child's first teachers--his or her parents. In many cases, parents continue to choose to spend intensive time with their small children at home. At the same time, growing numbers of families no longer have a support network of family and neighbors. Consequently, more and more children are born into families with significant risk factors. Given the importance of quality care and education, the Commission makes the following recommendations:

A. **The entire community must unite to assure that all children are ready to start school**. Schools and school districts shall collaborate with community, child, and family service organizations to ensure the development of a coordinated service delivery system for all young children. Communities should develop specific measures to evaluate the impact of these services.

B. **The Commission recommends that full funding be allocated to provide preschool to all four-year olds at risk of academic failure**. This proposal would provide services to an additional 3,400 children who are unserved by current programs.

C. **Parent education programs shall be available to parents of children birth through three years old**. Given what we know about the critical development of children in the first years of life, communities must provide specific supports to the parents of young children to ensure that students come to school ready to learn. The programs shall prepare parents as first teachers and give parents the child development strategies they need to maximize their child's ability to learn. The Commission believes that targeting state and local resources at this level could substantially reduce the investment of funds towards remediation, law enforcement and corrections.

IV. Transformation of the Education Profession for the 21st Century: Teachers and Administrators

In order for Iowa's educational system to emerge as the finest in the world, we must have the very best teachers and administrators who can prepare students for the challenges of tomorrow. Therefore, Iowa must continue to work to recruit, educate, and support a force of teachers who are well prepared in content and effective methods of instruction, knowledgeable in research on teaching and learning, and themselves enthusiastic and capable learners. These teachers will become professional leaders, taking on multifaceted responsibilities that extend beyond intellectual leadership in the classroom. They will share in decision making at the school and district levels and provide mentorship and support to their colleagues. Of utmost importance, they will work as team members, taking advantage of their "differentiated expertise" to meet the needs of their students (Liberman, Saxl, and Miles, 1988).

If we are to transform the teaching profession, the culture of the school must also change dramatically. As teachers take on the new, important roles that we envision, schools must be restructured to bring teachers out of the "ubiquitous isolation" that characterizes the lives of most teachers (Lieberman, Saxl, and Miles; 1988). Moreover, schools must adopt a "professional development strategy that is based on a system of multiple rewards and development resources, one that includes in its offerings opportunities for lateral and temporary moves as well as for continuous stimulation and development" (McLaughlin and Yee, 1988). Thus, we must also prepare Iowa's administrators to provide the collaborative leadership needed in the schools of tomorrow.

With both these goals in mind, the Commission makes the following recommendations.

A. **Postsecondary institutions and the Department of Education must redesign teacher and administrator education programs**. In considering efforts to improve K-12 education in the state of Iowa, it is imperative that the special role of teacher education be recognized. Efforts to improve teacher education and efforts to improve K-12

education must be seen as one and the same. The Commission is strongly committed to developing learner-centered teacher education programs and to graduating teachers who will in turn establish learner-centered classrooms in K-12 schools.

1. **Every graduate must demonstrate proficiency on performance measures approved by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners**. Teacher education programs should include rigorous course work, intensive classroom experiences over the four-year undergraduate program, understanding of differing learning styles, experiences with students from diverse backgrounds, and effective use of technology. In addition to cooperating teachers conducting an appraisal of students' performance, students should be required to develop a portfolio of their accomplishments and demonstrate successful mastery of subject matter through performance on national examinations or other appropriate measures.

2. **The preparation of all new teachers should include an internship following the completion of their baccalaureate degree**. One-year internships that are supported through the collaboration of schools or districts and postsecondary institutions should provide teaming of the intern with a sponsoring district teacher, as well as a stipend for the intern. Internships should provide graduate credit for a master's degree.

   Recognizing that internships will take some time to develop, induction programs should be provided by school districts for approximately three years until internships are a component of all preparation programs. The state would provide financial support to school districts for each new teacher who would be served through an approved induction program that includes a mentor teacher and additional training and support.

3. **The Department and State Board of Education shall institute new rules for approving teacher and administrator preparation programs based on their demonstration of continuous quality improvement**.

4. **The Board of Regents shall conduct a cost-benefit analysis of different accreditation alternatives for its teacher education programs**. A task force should evaluate these costs and benefits with representatives from the colleges and universities and professional associations, with recommendations due by July 1, 1998.

5. **Iowa's teacher education institutions shall adopt higher measures for entrance into teacher education programs**. All Iowa teacher education institutions should use a range of indicators of students' potential for successful

careers and create a competitive standard for entry into programs significantly higher than that currently found in Iowa and the nation.

6. **Iowa's teacher education programs, in collaboration with local school districts, should develop outreach programs that attract Iowa children and adults to the teaching career, with high priority placed on increasing diversity in the workforce**. The state should establish a forgivable loan program for teacher shortage areas such as industrial technology.

7. **Iowa's educator preparation institutions should seek opportunities to develop high quality, cooperative programs for administrators**. As an example, the Regents universities should establish a Regents-wide masters degree program for school principals. All programs that prepare administrators should be continuously monitored and improved to ensure that administrators have the leadership skills needed for tomorrow's schools.

B. **Licensing of new educators must be based upon proven performance**.

1. **In order to align licensing for out-of-state teachers with recommended new in-state teacher licensing requirements, teachers hired from out-of-state must, prior to licensing in Iowa, show that they have had a minimum of two years of teaching experience**.

2. **Interns and new inductees will be licensed upon successful completion of these programs**. Provisional licenses will be provided for the interns and new teacher inductees until they have successfully completed requirements established by the Board of Educational Examiners. A new teacher would be regarded as an apprentice in a permanent position, rather than as a conditional employee.

C. **The state of Iowa should substantially increase the minimum salary for teachers so that it approximates the national median**. The minimum teacher salary should be established at $23,000 on a statewide basis for the 1998-99 school year. In addition, a $25,000 minimum teacher salary should be established for the 1999-2000 school year for teachers completing an approved induction program. Also, a minimum salary of $27,000 would be established for those completing an intern program.

D. **The state of Iowa must provide recognition and professional growth opportunities for teachers and administrators to ensure that all professionals enhance their skills to provide for student needs and raise student achievement**.

1. **A commitment to quality, long-term professional development for teachers must be evident through the use of Phase III funds.**

   a. School district and area education agency improvement plans must provide evidence that professional development is long-term, focused on needed changes, and embedded in day-to-day practice. The professional development strategy should focus on the learning needs of students, provide ample opportunity for practice, feedback and reflection, incorporate a variety of incentives and rewards for teachers, include teachers in its design, and help foster a professional learning community.

   b. The use of technology to deliver training and help teachers create learner-centered classrooms is highly encouraged.

   c. Teachers and administrators cannot grow as intellectuals and professional leaders unless school cultures are supportive, collegial environments that provide opportunities for growth. School Boards and school administrators must recognize that their staff is their primary asset in serving students. They must insure that Phase III and other resources are dedicated to providing the time and opportunity for professional development.

2. **Highly skilled teachers and administrators should be rewarded.**

   a. **A program for meritorious recognition of public school instructional and administrative staff shall be developed by the Department of Education and other education stakeholders.** A nomination process will be established and nominees will be expected to document demonstrated performance as part of the application process. Selection would occur at the state level. State funding would provide a financial reward of $5,000 annually for a period of five years. Adequate financial resources should be provided for administration of the program. The maximum number of educators involved in the merit program at any time would be 6,000 teachers and 360 administrators.

   b. **The private sector should provide additional funds to recognize and compensate a more limited number of teachers whose performance merits statewide recognition.**

c. **The State of Iowa should pay $10,000 annually to each person employed by a public school district who holds National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification**. Board certification is valid for five years and may be renewed.

3. **Districts shall provide intervention or intensive assistance efforts for poor performing teachers and administrators who are not meeting district expectations**. These efforts should include adequate time and assistance to teachers and administrators who have received notification on the expectations that are not being met. Timelines for improvement and consequences should be clearly defined. Failure to meet those expectations shall result in termination. State or regional support networks will be developed to assist local school boards and administrators in implementing this recommendation.

4. **New staffing patterns and licensure requirements should be created to provide additional adult assistance to students who require additional time and help to meet district standards and to provide focused support in such areas as technology and parent-community involvement**. Licensing of these adults should be based on approved training programs that do not require completion of a four-year degree program. These individuals shall be compensated at levels equal to the required training.

E. **The state and local school districts should provide a one time incentive opportunity for early retirement**. Within a two year timeframe (FY 1999-2000), the state should share in the cost of health insurance, assisting licensed classroom teachers 59 years of age and older to retire.

V. Strong Family, Community and School Relationships

As society becomes more and more complex, schools alone cannot address the multitude of students' needs. Iowa has experienced dramatic socioeconomic and demographic changes over the past two decades. In some parts of the state, the changes have been extraordinary, but all mirror national trends. For example, a growing number of children are considered at risk as a result of social, economic, and environmental factors; the number of single parent households is increasing at a rapid rate; more families have two parents working outside the home; and there is a burgeoning number of students with limited English proficiency. Obviously, as our population changes at an even greater pace, schools must also change. If students are to succeed in school and life, parents and the entire community must work in tandem. To that end, the Commission makes the following recommendations.

A. **Schools and school districts shall adopt strategies for increasing the involvement of all families in school activities**. Flexible scheduling should be used to accommodate working families. Schools should also provide all parents with opportunities to enhance their communication, parenting and decision-making skills.

B. **Schools shall become year-round community learning centers offering services and educational opportunities beyond the school day**. Iowa's schools must become visible and active centers that offer an array of stimulating learning opportunities for the entire community year round. As an example, schools may become family resource centers, centers for older members of the community, and centers for lifelong learning. Schools and school districts shall view "their" resources, including technology, the ICN, recreation and meeting facilities as "community" resources, and districts shall encourage such community use as a matter of policy. This means that school schedules are more flexible and focused on the students, parents, and members of the community-at-large. Moreover, in designing new schools, school districts should consider the use of the school as a community center.

C. **The state should help fund schools choosing to extend their school year**. In order to allow more time for various student learning opportunities as well as teacher planning and professional development, some schools and school districts may elect to extend the school year. Some may choose to extend the school year to 190 days for students and 200 days for teachers, for example. Others may choose to extend the school year even longer, as do many other developed nations around the world.

D. **Cities, counties, service organizations, area education agencies and schools should collaborate to use their facilities, technology and resources to maximize efficiency and effectiveness**. To this end, Iowa's schools and communities shall engage in a community assessment process to determine the community's strengths and needs and develop plans that support educational goals for all members of the community.

E. **The local school district, businesses, agriculture and the labor community must jointly identify career transition skills and continuing educational needs of the community's students and existing workforce**. Schools shall assist students and families in exploring career options. Business and labor shall provide students and teachers with work site experiences and applied learning opportunities, while schools shall find ways for members of business and the labor community to participate in the instructional program.

VI. Financial Support for Education

While financial issues were not in the Commission's purview, we recommend that the Governor and the Legislature consider several funding options in order to implement the Commission's recommendations. Each new option should be examined in light of the state's obligation to provide adequate, equitable, and sustained funding for public education. With these caveats in mind,

A. **The Commission's recommendations shall be phased in and fully implemented within five years**. Multi-year funding strategies will be needed to implement all of the Commission's recommendations. At the end of five years, the level of funding should correspond to full implementation.

B. **School districts and their boards must use the principles of continuous improvement to evaluate program effectiveness and the use of resources**. To improve cost efficiency, schools and school districts should consider the following: collaboration with other community entities; joint purchases of services (accounting, purchasing, professional development) across school districts; consolidation of federal, state and local funds where appropriate; and multi-purpose use of school facilities and equipment.

C. **The state should continue to provide stable and equitable funding for all districts through the school finance formula**. Adjustments in the method of calculating certain school funding areas may be needed if certain Commission recommendations are implemented.

D. **School districts should be allowed to access up to 50 percent of the local option sales tax if currently in effect and up to 100 percent of newly approved or re-authorized local options sales taxes for their capital improvement needs**.

E. **To provide another incentive for communities to address school building needs, the state should exempt local school bonds from state tax**.

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